

STRUGGLE FOR LIGNY.

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treason of General Bourmont had given birth to sentiments of doubt and fear, which were entirely dissipated by the successful issue of this first battle. Hitherto each chief of a corps had retained its immediate command, and it is easy to suppose what their ardor and emulation must have been; but the Emperor fell into the error of overturning the hopes of their courage and their ambition. He placed General d'Erlon and Count Keille under the orders of Marshal Key, whom he brought forward too late; and Count Gerard and Count Vandamme under the orders of Marshal Grouchy, whom, it would have been better to have left at the head of the cavalry.

Marshal Grouchy, with the 3d and 4th corps, and the cavalry of Generals Pajol, Excelmans, and Milhaud, was placed on the heights of Fleurus, and in advance of them. The 6th corps and the Guard were in *echelon* between Fleurus and Charleroi. On the 16th the army of Marshal Blu-cher, 90,000 strong, collected together with great skill, was posted on the heights of Brie and Sombref, and occupied the villages of Ligny and St. Amand, which protected his front. His cavalry extended far in advance on the road to Namur. The army of the Duke of Wellington, which this General had not yet had time to collect, was composed of about 100,000 men, scattered between Ath, Nivelles, Genappe, and Brussels.

The Emperor went in person to reconnoitre Blucher's position, and penetrating his intentions resolved to give him battle before his reserves and the English army, for which he was endeavoring to wait, should have time to arrive. He immediately sent orders to Marshal Key, whom he supposed to have been on the march for Quatre Bras, *where he would have found very few forces*, to drive the English briskly before him, and then fall with his main force on the rear of the Prussian army. At the same time he made a change in the front of the Imperial Army: Marshal Grouchy advanced towards Sombref, General Gerard towards Ligny, and General Vandamme towards St. Amand.

General Girard, with his division, 5000 strong, was detached from the 2d corps, and placed in the rear of General Vandamme's left, so as to support him, and at the same time form a communication between Marshal Ney's army and that of Napoleon. The Guard and Milhaud's cuirassiers were disposed as a reserve in advance of Fleurus. At three o'clock the 3d corps reached St. Amand and carried it. The Prussians, rallied by Blucher, retook the village. The French, intrenched in the churchyard, defended themselves there with obstinacy, but, overpowered by numbers, they were about to give way when General Drouot, who has more than once decided the fate of a battle, galloped up with four batteries of the Guard, took the enemy in the rear, and stopped his career. At the same moment Marshal Grouchy was fighting successfully at Sombref, and General Gerard made an impetuous attack on the village of Ligny. Its crenellated walls and a long ravine rendered the approaches to it not less difficult than dangerous. But these obstacles did not intimidate General Lefol, or the brave fellows under his command; they advanced with the